SCRIPT BITS!
Issue: Sonic the Hedgehog #161 (APR'06)
Pages: p2-4, 7, 9-10

Welcome one and all to **Script Bits!** This monthly feature will take roughly forty-five percent of a story in Archie Comic's *Sonic the Hedgehog* and present it to you as insight into the writing process.

Part of the fun of this feature will be comparing what was written and what saw print. Sometimes the vision is tweaked as the artists interpret the script. Sometimes the original idea doesn't work once put on paper and must be adjusted from there. Sometimes the artist has a stroke of genius and does something different than what the script calls for - and it's for the better!

So pull out your copy of *Sonic the Hedgehog* #161 from April of 2006 and get ready to read along!

Remembering "Birthday Bash!" part two

"Birthday Boys" was wholly the pay-off for the previous issue. We had Shadow on the scene, we had Croctobot to answer for, and Evil Sonic had just debuted as the overhauled "Scourge." Now the trick was tying everything together.

The first piece was Croctobot, which was a source of fearful complaint last time and has since been hailed as a comedic masterstroke. Former fan-turned-artist Jon "WB" Grey introduced me to the concept back when I was doing early preparation work and scripts and he was finishing out his final issue. I later found out the fusion was the brainchild of (then) recently departed Karl Bollers. Karl had wanted Croctobot to be a bipolar sub-boss. I didn't find this out until after I'd had a good laugh and gotten rid of him/them.

Croctobot actually almost didn't make it into the comic. In the very early drafts it was E-123 Omega sent in to do some damage after Bean and Bark had failed. There were a number of problems with this, one of which being it was a waste of the character. The revision had an immediate transition from Bean and Bark to Scourge, but the pacing was off. It was decided there had to be some kind of threat to bring us from the 2-B over to the real threat of Scourge. Thus, Croctobot was drafted for the role. He/They gave us our laugh and served the purpose of equalizing Scourge with Sonic and Shadow.

The biggest hurdle with Scourge was to prove he was a threat; an honest step up from Evil Sonic. The first step was his rematch with Locke. If you will recall StH#151, Locke made very short work of Evil Sonic, and we saw him effortlessly tend to him again in StH#160. To show we had a new contender on our hands, Scourge takes out Locke quickly and savagely. Then, when in the clutches of Croctobot, Scourge goes on to deal just as much damage - and in the same fashion - as Sonic and Shadow.

Then there was the unavoidable confrontation between the three hedgehogs. Here was the hurdle-within-the-hurdle: to make Scourge dangerous enough to be a threat to both, but not to go overboard with him and turn him into a Mary Sue of sorts. It's for that very reason that Scourge shows weakness when he's double-teamed, how his move against Sonic and Shadow is purposefully desperate, and why he's nearly spent when he

emerges victorious. When the Freedom Fighters finally step in we've reached the limit and it's time for our villains to exit, stage right.

There are two other points of interest in this issue. One of the things I've been aiming to do with Fiona is build upon her past and have it cast a shadow over her present. There's more going on in Bean and Bark's exit scene than it first appears. Second was the very end of the story where we see Dr. Finitevus. It was a moment of serendipity; Scourge and Rouge escaping into his presence was my original intention, but if you'll recall form the previous Script Bits!, "Birthday Bash" was written *after* "The Darkest Storm." In writing the script, it was a moment where everything "clicked," leading to Dr. Finitevus's last line. Also, I think it was a line that Mike Pellerito suggested and it happened to work in the context of what I was planning.

The selection we have for this edition have the "punchline" to Crocotbot, Scourge's big debut scene, Bean and Bark's exit and - by request - Shadow versus Scourge.

PAGE TWO

PANEL ONE - CROCTOBOT (see note from last issue) looms menacingly from the right. SHADOW and any FREEDOM FIGHTERS you can fit into the scene fall back a step, looking defensive. SONIC bites his lower lip and tries to contain his mirth.

CROCBOT (dual tail to each “head”)
(logo) Sonic the Hedgehog!
Your doom comes at the hands and tentacles of
CROCTOBOT!

PANEL TWO - Both sets of eyes on CROCTOBOT go round and confused as SONIC bursts into gales of laughter and clutches his stomach.

SONIC
BWA HA HA HA!
No! Stop! Time-out!

PANEL THREE - SONIC leans over, hands braced on his knees, almost crying from laughter. TAILS stands close by, standing confident and defiant. CROCTOBOT looms into the panel, trying to be menacing.

SONIC
Lamest - -
- - badnik - -
- - ever!

CROCTOBOT
Hey!
I’m terrifying!

TAILS
No way!
I beat both of you back in the day!*

SONIC (large, disjointed)
AH HA HA HA HA!!!

EDITORIAL NOTE
*with some help in the classic Tails mini-series

PANEL FOUR - TAILS swoops around, tails spinning like a propeller, and flies SONIC to safety. SONIC wipes a mirthful tear from his eye. CROCTOBOT stabs multiple tentacles into the ground where SONIC was a second ago.

CROCBOT
You **will** fear me!

TAILS
Whoa!
Come on, Sonic, get a grip!

SONIC
(small) hee hee hee!
Okay, okay.
(small) Claws **and** tentacles! HAW!

PAGE THREE

PANEL ONE - Haven II (see S#151). SCOURGE looks at his hands, shades sitting low on his nose. He gives himself a nasty, self-appraising smile. ROUGE is impressed and surprised as she gapes from the right of the panel. LOCKE glowers and rushes, fist raised. The MASTER EMERALD glows near-by.

ROUGE
You've . . . changed!

SCOURGE
For the better, babe.
No more lame "evil twin" shtick for me.

LOCKE
You'll be thrown out just as easily as before.

PANEL TWO - Narrow, long panel. Extreme close-up of SCOURGE's eyes as he gives a homicidal glare. Black background with lightening bolt rushing behind him.

I'm thinking like that anime/manga short-hand for the bad-ass suddenly acknowledging a threat.

PANEL THREE - Square panel, tilted to an angle, with jagged border. SCOURGE delivers a right-cross, LOCKE (foreground) jerking at the blow.

PANEL FOUR - Square panel, tilted to an angle, with jagged border and next to the previous one. SCOURGE delivers a painful-looking side-kick into LOCKE's gut, doubling him over.

PANEL FIVE - Square panel, titled to an angle, with jagged border and next to the previous one. Close-up on SCOURGE as he strikes downward, snarl/smiling as LOCKE's dreadlocks trail into the shot.

PANEL SIX - The last of the page. LOCKE's crumpled form takes the focus. SCOURGE stands over him, wickedly triumphant. ROUGE rushes to him, aghast.

SCOURGE
Try that again, old man.

PAGE FOUR

PANEL ONE - Freedom HQ. FIONA hangs back near the entrance to the dome. In the background, CROCTOBOT flails backwards as SONIC spin-dashes an "uppercut" to him. We see the path of motion from the rushing attack. TAILS cheers in mid-air.

FIONA
Man-o-man . . .
Look at him go!

BEAN (off-panel)
Yeah, he's pretty quick.

PANEL TWO - Fiona wheels around to find BEAN and BARK making their exit. BARK claps his hand against his forehead, mortified. BEAN smiles and waves, oblivious.

FIONA
Bean! Bark!

BEAN
Hey Fiona!
We'll be on our way.

PANEL THREE - FIONA roughly grabs BEAN's neckerchief. He looks indignant.

FIONA
You try to blow up my boyfriend and then decide you can just walk out?

BEAN
Well duh.
I was going to ask if you wanted to come along.
Have some fun like the old days.

PANEL FOUR - FIONA recoils as if shocked and looks away defensively. BEAN and BARK walk away from her.

FIONA
I can't!
I . . . I'm a Freedom Fighter now.

BEAN
Suuuuuuure you are.
Well, whatever.
Tell Nic I said "hey" if you see her again.

PAGE SEVEN

PANEL ONE - CROCTOBOT raises his hands and tentacles to the sky (and us) swinging the hedgehogs about roughly. He roars.

CROCTOBOT
I still function!

PANEL TWO - CROCTOBOT brings SHADOW close and they exchange glares - CROCTOBOT melodramatic while SHADOW is reserved. In the background, SONIC and SCOURGE nod gravely to each other.

CROCTOBOT
You're doing nothing to help, Shadow!
I shall report you as a traitor to Dr. Robotnik!

SHADOW
No.
You won't.

SONIC
Quick truce to finish this up?

SCOURGE
Works for me.

PANEL THREE - Largest panel of the page. CROCTOBOT flails, wide-eyed as he's torn to shreds. Three of his tentacles pull in odd directions with a different transparent path-of-motion color to it:
[Shadow] black (grey) with a red-orange lightening strike,
[Scourge] green
[Sonic] blue
There are a number of entry and exit punctures all through CROCTOBOT with different colored path-of-motion lines leading in, out and all around him. Orbiting around him are the balled-up spin-dashing SCOURGE, SONIC and SHADOW with respective colored paths-of-motion.

This can get really confusing really fast, so PLEASE leave notes for the other artists so they can keep up with what's come before.

CROCTOBOT (arching, diminishing)
NOOOOO!

PANEL FOUR - Small, narrow cap to the end of the page. The top half of CROCBOT's (Crocbot's) head drops amid a rain of robot pieces. The hedgehogs stand side-by-side, in silhouette, in the background.

<u>PAGE NINE</u>

PANEL ONE - SHADOW seizes SCOURGE by the collar of his jacket. SHADOW is icy in his scowl. SCOURGE looks back with a fiery, almost insane smile/snarl.

SHADOW
Enough.
I have questions.

SCOURGE
You want a piece of this too, stripes?

PANEL TWO - SCOURGE throws SHADOW, the latter landing roughly.

PANEL THREE - Close-up on SHADOW, wide-eyed and livid.

SHADOW
Grave mistake!

PANEL FOUR - Large panel showing the forest surrounding the dome. The FREEDOM FIGHTERS and ROUGE wince and duck as multiple paths of motion (black/grey with a red/orange lightening bolt & green) criss-cross. Where they meet, they veer off sharply from each other with an impact flash. This can get a bit confusing, so please make notes for the following artists as to what's what.

SFX (paths of motions)
Whoosh!

SFX (impacts)
SKYOW!

PAGE TEN

PANEL ONE - Worm's eye view from the ground. SHADOW's path of motion comes in from the right, then sharply comes down to us. SHADOW himself slams into the ground with a grimace. SCOURGE's path of motion comes in from the left and meets SHADOW's with an impact flash. SCOURGE drops back from it, his fists pumping triumphantly in the air. ROUGE gives him a droll look.

SCOURGE
HA!
Two for two!

ROUGE
You've assured your masculinity.
Can we get back to the Master Emerald now?

PANEL TWO - SONIC, looking a bit battered, pulls SHADOW up by the hand. They both look menacingly at SCOURGE. SHADOW's look is lethal while SONIC looks like he's enjoying himself. SCOURGE thumbs his nose at them.

SONIC
I think we need to double our odds, Shadow.

SHADOW
For the moment.

SCOURGE
Bring all you can!
I'll dish it back double!

PANEL THREE - SCOURGE goes wide eyed and stumbles back as the transparent SONIC and SHADOW paths of motions rush on either side of him. The rush causes his jacket and spines to flap slightly.

SCOURGE
B-B-Bring it . . .!

PANEL FOUR - Aerial view. SCOURGE holds up his hands defensively as the blue and black/w red bolt paths of motion swirl and encircle him. It's like he's being tightly circles by a pair of motorcycles, each going mach 1.

PANEL FIVE - SCOURGE leaps, awkwardly flailing in the air. SONIC and SHADOW (in spin-dash balls) narrowly pass under him and ricochet off each other with a small impact flash.

SCOURGE
WHOA!

SFX (impact)
Skyow!